

Journal of Information Literacy

ISSN 1750-5968

Volume 8 Issue 2

December 2014

Book review

Wolfenden, S. 2014. Book review of Crane, B. 2013. *How to teach - a practical guide for librarians*. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield. *Journal of Information Literacy*, 8(2), pp. 173-174.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.11645/8.2.1950>

Copyright for the article content resides with the authors, and copyright for the publication layout resides with the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals, Information Literacy Group. These Copyright holders have agreed that this article should be available on Open Access.

“By 'open access' to this literature, we mean its free availability on the public internet, permitting any users to read, download, copy, distribute, print, search, or link to the full texts of these articles, crawl them for indexing, pass them as data to software, or use them for any other lawful purpose, without financial, legal, or technical barriers other than those inseparable from gaining access to the internet itself. The only constraint on reproduction and distribution, and the only role for copyright in this domain, should be to give authors control over the integrity of their work and the right to be properly acknowledged and cited.”
Chan, L. et al 2002. *Budapest Open Access Initiative*. New York: Open Society Institute. Available at: <http://www.soros.org/openaccess/read.shtml> [Retrieved 22 January 2007].

Crane, B. (2013) *How to teach - a practical guide for librarians*. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield. pp 198. ISBN 978-0810891050 £39.95. Pbk.

Sarah Wolfenden, Subject Liaison Librarian, Brunel University, London.

Email: Sarah.Wolfenden@brunel.ac.uk

Are you new to librarianship? Do you have a job that requires you to teach or train people? It is likely you were not taught how to do this at library school and so are now just a little nervous. Beverley Crane, author of *How to Teach*, recognises that this is quite a normal scenario for many librarians and has written this book to address these issues. Divided into nine chapters, this large-format paperback is aimed primarily at librarians who are new to teaching, as well as acting as a welcoming refresher for those with significantly more experience. The content addresses a variety of teaching methods including teaching one person, addressing a large group, creating online workshops and lessons, teaching face-to-face and other traditional approaches. It is aimed at those teaching in public, academic and special libraries, and is very much focused on the US market. Despite this US slant, there is much of use for audiences from elsewhere, due to the numerous tips and templates provided throughout the book.

Like any good lesson plan, each chapter sets out its main objectives for its reader. Acknowledging that her audience often lack knowledge of pedagogy Crane provides a basic background of behaviorist, humanist, cognitivist and constructivist theories and theorists. This provides enough information to allow readers to choose a theory to base their own style on. Crane also outlines her reasons for believing that the way adults and children learn varies and, as a result, that they should be taught differently. Personally, I would have liked a little more depth of information in this area, especially as the book is aimed at both those who teach children and those who teach adults; however, the reader can follow this up themselves by using the bibliography. Each chapter concludes with exercises for readers to try, a list of references and suggested further reading.

One of the best aspects of the book is the presence of lots of tips on planning and designing sessions with plenty of templates to use. The book is titled *A practical guide* and it really is – someone with very little or no experience of teaching could take one of these templates and plot out a lesson quite quickly and easily. Each chapter includes a list of recommended websites and blogs for those who wish to research further training ideas so the book can be used as a stepping stone to others. There are many examples throughout of how the training has been delivered and received by participants in the classroom and, as you would expect from an American book, the examples are all from American institutions. While this does not detract too much, as the examples are generally relevant, I did find myself thinking that I would have preferred more examples from elsewhere, especially as it is now much easier to get these through social media and membership of the international professional organisations the author refers to.

There are several chapters on e-learning, in which the author looks at the advantages, disadvantages and challenges of this format. She then does the same for one-off and longer information literacy courses. She also includes chapters on synchronous and asynchronous learning yet, surprisingly considering their ubiquitousness, there is nothing mentioned about massive open online courses (MOOCs). This appears as quite a large omission and made me instinctively (and perhaps wrongly) believe that the book was not as up-to-date as it could have been.

Despite these negatives there is much of practical use. There are some nice examples of how Pinterest and Libguides are being used in public, academic and research libraries. These include the provision of lesson plans, rubrics, and timed outlines on evaluating web sources and identifying the advantages and disadvantages of social media resources. This will be advantageous for anyone who is just starting to teach their users about social media for learning, teaching or research. While I like a teaching book to have some theory, I especially like finding out about real-life tips I can put into practice straight away, and Crane's book contains many of these. They range from tips on how to present yourself in front of a group of learners, and make a good professional first impression, to how to deal with the logistics of large groups versus small numbers of individuals. There are also tips on presenting for those who may not be so familiar with the practice including with the use of visual aids as well as suggesting questions to ask yourself when considering the effectiveness of handouts.

Ultimately this book met its objectives of being a suitable resource for those new to teaching to be able to dip into it, take out a lesson plan with templates for timed activities and worksheets, and either deliver them without making any changes or, alternatively, alter them to fit their audience. The book can be a little dry and it would have been nice to have read some anecdotes from students and staff who had experienced being taught by the methods highlighted. There is little that is ground-breaking or new. That said the book does the job it sets out to do, has been given a comparatively reasonable price point and will be a useful and regularly-used addition to any new teaching librarian's collection.